



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Luke: Gospel of the Son of Man

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Bob Lewis / P O Box 123 Harrisburg, PA 17108 www.capitolcom.org / Bob.Lewis@capitolcom.org

Luke the physician, companion of Paul
Redeemed by the gospel, propelled by the call.
He went where it led, did what was asked,
He counted the cost, and shouldered the task

What was he like? What made him to be
The beloved of Paul, a model to me?
He was a gentile, not one of the twelve
But gifted by God and possessed of resolve.

He listened and learned, he inquired and sought,
Then wrote what he did after reasoned thought.
Thank God for Theophilus, and Luke's concern,
May Your Spirit assist us as we strive to learn.

Why the Gospel of Luke?

Of the three synoptic gospels, Luke's is undoubtedly the one most oriented, fully, toward those outside the Jewish Community.

Matthew's gospel serves to address the Jewish community directly while maintaining needed value for non-Jews, historically.

The same can be said for Mark's gospel, though with a decided focus toward an appeal to the Roman mind-set.

Mark is directly related to Peter, and I tend, personally, toward the two source theory relative to the gospel compositions meaning, I suspect Mark's gospel is a compilation of those items not covered in Matthew or Luke. In this regard, I have been persuaded by the writings of David Alan Black¹.

The three gospels, denoted Synoptic, meaning "with the same view", provide us, along with John's gospel a full orb'd record of the ministry of the Lord Jesus beginning with the angelic announcement to Zacharias to Jesus' ascension from the mountain into the very throne room of God, most High.

An interesting insight; just as Exodus opens with the birth of Moses and Deuteronomy ends with the death of Moses, the four gospels focus on the birth and death of Jesus, the greater than Moses and the ultimate deliverer.

Contrary to the opinions of many today and throughout history, there is no "synoptic problem"². The suggestion was made ages ago that, because the gospel accounts were not word for word verbatim records, there was a "synoptic problem".

Well, if you are a parent of more than one child you have learned, first hand, regarding the differing reports of the same event!

Having personally spent years as an aircraft accident investigator and taking countless eye-witness statements to the same event from similar and slightly different viewpoints, I am well acquainted with variances in one's testimony or viewpoint. Generally, the truth resided in the sum total of eye witness testimony. Such is the case with what are termed the Synoptic Gospels.

But, back to the gospel of Luke.

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.

Luke tells us, up front, he took great pains determining his conclusions. His record is not off-hand, nor casual. He is not an eye-witness, but spoke with eye-witnesses. He was personally aware of much of the writings of that early era relative to Jesus and endeavored to investigate and corroborate. History has amply demonstrated the accuracy of Luke's account, though for decades it was subjected to ridicule and scorn. As the scripture declares, "...wisdom is justified of her children..".

Authorship

The gospel is anonymous in terms of internal comment. Luke nowhere states he is the author. Nor does any gospel writer. Earliest documentary evidence finds appended to this gospel the label "kata lukon", i.e 'according to Luke', and the testimony of the earliest church fathers, apologists, and polemicists all concur respecting Luke as the author of this gospel. Therefore, I personally subscribe to Lukan authorship.

Identification of Luke

The scriptural data regarding Luke is sparse, at best. It appears he was a Greek, though that has been contested by some; it also appears he was a physician³, again contested by some, and that he was a traveling companion of the Apostle Paul⁴ (not contested!).

PENNSYLVANIA

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Date of Gospel

Unknown. Not mentioned in the gospel, explicitly. Most scholars seem to agree Luke had access to Mark's gospel (assumed to have been penned first) as well as Matthew's. Opinions vary greatly as to the dating of the gospel, but I am of the opinion it is well before the destruction of the temple in AD 70. It may well have been researched and drafted during Paul's imprisonment at Caserea and then summarized while Paul was in custody in Rome. It may well have been sent to Theophilus subsequent to Paul's release. All of which is conjecture on our part.

Purpose of the Gospel

Immediately, the purpose is declared: the correct and accurate education of an individual named Theophilus. Speculation abounds as to the identity of this individual. His name means "God lover" or "lover of God". His title can mean a number of things: 1) he may have been a political official, or 2) a financial patron of Luke's subsidizing Luke's investigation and subsequent report, i.e. the Gospel and the sequel The Acts of the Apostles.

It appears Theophilus was orally⁵ instructed in terms of The Faith. At this point in history, oral instruction, or "catechism" had not been formally established, but Theophilus was obviously orally instructed such that Luke believed it necessary to more fully complete the instruction with this gospel narrative and the subsequent Acts of the Apostles.

We recognize the limited circulation of inspired writings at this date, historically. Such being the case, oral instruction served to meet the need til authoritative instructors arrived (Apostles or apostolic delegates) and supplemented or corrected what had been passed on.

Historicity

Within a few short chapters Luke provides such detailed historical data, exposing his writings to public scrutiny such that their veracity can be easily challenged.

It would appear Luke is not fearful of such public scrutiny. Within the first few chapters, Luke provides such accurate historical information⁶ that it would have been very easy for anyone desiring to dispute what was written; but such disputation is historically lacking.

In fact, Sir William Mitchell Ramsay⁷ in the 19th century embarked on an investigation designed to dispute Luke's record only to

become a follower of Jesus Christ based, in part, on his confidence in Luke's authenticity.

Prologue

The prologue of this gospel is unique compared with Matthew and Mark. It is quite apparent the author penned the prologue after writing the narrative. The prologue is written in classical Greek compared with the remainder of the gospel and in the style consistent with contemporary literature suggesting the author intended an appeal to a wider audience among the Gentile community. The style mirrors that of Jesus ben Sirach⁸ and Josephus⁹ as well as other writers of Antiquity.

Luke's gospel, along with his Acts of the Apostles comprises a major portion of the New Testament corpus. Personally, I find it fascinating God would employ a Gentile in the work of penning such a major segment of the New Testament. Especially, in light of the inauguration of the New Covenant.

The collaboration of Paul, the Hebrew of the Hebrews¹⁰, a Pharisee educated by Gamaliel¹¹, the premiere rabbi, and Luke, a Greek /Gentile physician is, to me, an evidence of God's sovereign engineering of history as the New Covenant is introduced and unfolds in the first century context.

The riches of Luke's Gospel will unfold in the weeks and months ahead.

Application

My plan is to introduce each chapter with a quatrain (a four stanza poem encompassing that chapter). I would encourage you to memorize these quatrains. They will serve to focus your mind on a particular chapter, ultimately enabling you to speak your way through each chapter of Luke's gospel.

¹ <http://www.daveblackonline.com/>

² [Is There A Synoptic Problem?](#) Eta Linneman

³ Colossians 4:14

⁴ Acts 16:10-17

⁵ Acts 1:4-κατηχήθης (catechesis)

⁶ Luke 1-3, esp. 3:1,2

⁷ <http://bit.ly/eDS7R9>

⁸ Ecclesiasticus, introduction

⁹ Josephus, Wars of the Jews, introduction

¹⁰ Phillipians 3:5

¹¹ Acts 5:34; 22:3